



PRESS RELEASE

One-Day Conference

“Pakistan-India Relations: Post Congress Era”



BILATERALISM HAS FAILED: CONFERENCE ADVOCATES FIRM STANCE AGAINST INDIA

A conference on “Pakistan-India Relations :Post Congress Era” held in Islamabad today was unanimous in its assertion that India’s adamant stance should now be met with firm and consistent policy stand abandoning appeasement which only seems to add to Modi government’s obduracy in its dealings with Pakistan. The conference concluded that bilateralism had only benefitted India in prolonging the status quo and it was time internationalization of issues like Kashmir was adopted as the logical option.

The conference organised by Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) gave an overview of BJP’s policies, its internal political dynamics and impact on Pakistan India relations which it was held were at a stand still thanks to Modi government’s cancellation of foreign secretary level talks, violations across the LOC and Indian opposition to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. In his opening remarks Ambassador Sohail Amin, president IPRI said the expectations of some healthy change engendered at the time of Mr Modi’s coming to power had been belied and the relations between the two neighbours were at their lowest ebb. The chief guest, Lt General ® Asif Yasin Malik advocated a tough front of quid pro quo and argued that India’s jittery behavior was due to its failure to brow beat Pakistan. Brig.(r) Said Nazir Mahmood presented an overview of BJP’s policies and said they were based on the concept of Hindutva

and in confrontation with Pakistan lay its survival. Dr Arshi Saleem Hashmi explained the internal political dynamics of BJP which was it was finding hard to balance against its democratic secular image. Dr Muhammad Khan evaluated the prospects of Bilateral relations under Modi's administration and held bilateralism was a self serving strategy for India and only helped in maintaining the status quo.

The conference recommended that:

- The hostile relations between India and Pakistan have inflicted immense damage to their prospects of socio-economic development and prevented the realization of their full potential. Instead of pursuing zero-sum game, India should look for cooperative and flexible approaches towards Pakistan.
- BJP government should come out of the RSS mindset for communal harmony internally and peace with Pakistan.
- An urgent change is required in India's hawkish lobby within the Indian political circle. Unless BJP abandoned its anti-Pakistan rhetoric reconciliation with Pakistan would not be possible.
- The manifesto of the BJP is viewed with some reservations in Pakistan because of its hawkish and revisionist undertones. The BJP manifesto requires the reversal of India's traditional nuclear doctrine built on the principle of 'No-First Use' (NFU). This reversal signals an assertive and provocative posturing by India on nuclear and strategic issues. Such actions may destabilize the fragile deterrence stability in the South Asia region and is likely to force Islamabad to respond forcefully to 'restore' the strategic balance
- India's involvement in activities of destabilizing Pakistan and Indian Prime Minister's statement in Bangladesh regarding Indian role in abetting the insurgency should be raised at international forums.
- The world community knowingly or unknowingly is ignoring the internal dynamics of Indian brinkmanship. The propaganda hype on 'cross border infiltration' and campaign against Pakistan's involvement in IJK resistance is an attempt to divert attention of the international community from the real contentious issues. To counter such moves, Pakistan needs to give up responding to India's innovative pre-conditions and adopt a pro-active diplomatic role at regional and international levels.

- Pakistan has to make BJP realize that policy of acrimony towards Pakistan would yield no dividends and we are no easy prey for India. For all this, we have to pursue an integrated approach involving all pillars of state based on national consensus. This can only be achieved by nurturing an informed debate on relations with India.
- Pakistan has to adopt a very firm and consistent stance on various issues vis a vis India. Its policies have to stand by the people of Kashmir. There was a demoralizing effect due to recent happenings in Delhi and Russia where the joint press release even failed to mention Kashmir. We have to firmly pursue the case of Indian involvement in terrorism in Pakistan as stated by Indian officials.
- Pakistan-India composite dialogue should be resumed. A new format of composite dialogue agreed to by both Pakistan and India could be formulated. Pakistan should give its own thought to what kind of dialogue process it should have and what sort of format it will take; there should be an internal debate within Pakistan.
- While continuing its stance on Kashmir, Pakistan may adopt CBMs approach to resolve Kashmir according to the aspirations of Kashmiri people. The CBMs may include protection of the human rights in Indian Held Kashmir (IHK), the demilitarization of the area and the facilitation of travel and trade across the LoC.
- Water issues should be resolved through the mechanisms provided by the Indus Basin Treaty.
- The analysis of the Indian policy reveals that unless it is responded to in the same coin, it will continue to aggravate the friction.
- Frustrated with failure of the cold start doctrine and limited war, now India is following a sub-conventional strategy to destabilize Pakistan by exploiting its internal vulnerabilities. To thwart the Indian sinister designs, Pakistan needs to build up its Armed Forces and strengthen its economic muscle. The operation Zarb-e-Azb launched in North Waziristan is the right step in this direction.
- There is a dichotomy in India's position on regional connectivity. On one hand, it talks about regional connectivity whereas its opposition to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is in sharp contrast to regionalism. India will have to give up its stubborn stance.
- The agenda of economic development and trans-regional energy trade could also be the points of convergence between Pakistan and India. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC),

constituting energy transfer/regional connectivity could bridge the regional divide. Success of CPEC hinges on peaceful regional environment involving all stake holders including India. Indian opposition, to the corridor could be diluted through enhanced economic diplomacy and cooperative policies.

- India desires to have trade with Afghanistan and CARs. The commercial route connecting Central Asia with the Indian Ocean is via Pakistan and Afghanistan. The cost of transport from Pakistan to Central Asia is cheaper, and gas, coal, oil could easily be transported through the corridor. Therefore, if India wants to have access to the natural resources of CARs, it will have to improve relations with Pakistan.
- At the regional level, Pakistan must strengthen strategic partnership with China, try to re-build trust with Afghanistan, should have cordial ties with the West, Iran and Turkey, and should also build up bridges of understanding with Russia while developing cooperation with Central Asian Republics.
- Pakistan's short-term policies relating to India must be cast within the framework of a long-term strategy to safeguard our national interests. Such an approach in dealing with India would impart a modicum of stability and strength to our India policy while avoiding frustrations and disappointments which are the product of unrealistic policies driven by short-term and short-sighted considerations. A realistic comprehension of the long-term prospects of Pakistan-India relations must form the basis on which to raise the edifice of our India policy.
- The peace between Pakistan and India is a pre-requisite for social progress, economic development and stability in South Asia. Normalization of relations between Pakistan and India will depend on mutual reciprocity. Either side has to come forth for the common goal of prosperity for the people of Pakistan and India and the South Asian region at large.
- Both Pakistan and India could be beneficiary of bilateralism. If bilateralism isn't working, there is no harm in resorting to other mechanisms. Bangladesh and Myanmar resolved their outstanding dispute over delimitations of the boundaries in EEZ through arbitration. There can be a way forward in Indo-Pak relations by defrosting bilateralism and taking a new start by engaging itself politically and diplomatically at international level and by analyzing and exploring the new opportunities and international avenues.

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